

AmeriCorps

Graceland University's AmeriCorps Youth Launch engages 28 members who provide a youth-serving network through positive youth development activities in a six county region; one of the poorest and most rural areas of the state. Youth development is seen as a route to community development for this struggling, rural region. AmeriCorps members serve in school and community-based sites building programs that promote caring adults, safe places to learn and grow, healthy starts, effective education, and opportunities to serve. The program has a lasting impact by changing the culture of the community, positioning youth as community assets and leaders. A 2011 program evaluation yielded the following results: more than 80 percent of respondents rated the program good or excellent in "strengthening community," 95 percent said the program builds positive assets within the youth served, and 95 percent felt the program is effective in impacting youth positively.

AmeriCorps NCCC

Louisa County has more than 16,000 acres of public land in natural resources, which requires intensive land management. Involving and educating the public about natural resources is imperative to the public land's continued protection. The three public agencies (Louisa County Conservation Board, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Iowa Department of Natural Resources) managing the land have limited staff resources to accomplish the task. AmeriCorps NCCC members assisted with prescribed burning, land management, environmental education, and helping plan the county's Earth Day Clean-up. Members had the opportunity to gain skills in event planning and environmental conservation.

AmeriCorps VISTA

The Meskwaki Food Sovereignty Initiative AmeriCorps VISTA Program sponsor by the Sac & Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa is utilizing four VISTA members to build capacity by developing of a thriving, healthy, local community food system. The goal of the initiative is to increase food security, health, education, and economic opportunities by increasing the availability of fresh, locally-raised foods. In 2013, the program wrapped up its first year of sponsorship and the amount of community conversations and community buy-in around local foods, traditional foods, and community food system development has increased significantly. More than 60 people attended a film festival; more than 22 people attended a planning event on food sovereignty; and four community members have stepped up to facilitate workshops.

Senior Corps

RSVP volunteers from the Central Iowa RSVP in Story City participated in a Winter Weatherization Challenge and weatherized 66 homes of 189 low-income or frail elderly individuals in Story and Marshall Counties. Volunteers received training, conducted assessments of energy-related needs in the homes, and according to homeowner needs, put plastic on windows, sealed leaks in door and window frames, installed door sweeps, caulked around windows and doors, and shared energy savings tips with homeowners. Of the homeowners who received the volunteers' services 90 percent reported that they learned about a new energy-saving tip and 89 percent said that their homes were more energy efficient as a result of the weatherization.

Social Innovation Fund

Central Iowa Works Funding Collaborative (CIWFC) serves a multicounty region of Central Iowa and was awarded an initial grant of \$600,000 over two years by Social Innovation Fund (SIF) intermediary Jobs for the Future, which they will match dollar-for-dollar. The SIF investment will allow CIWFC to scale of their investment in workforce partnerships in the health care, energy, and financial services sectors. They will also establish a new advanced manufacturing partnership. Through these workforce partnerships, CIWFC expects to support 455 job seekers and 355 incumbent workers in their efforts to prepare for, attain, and advance in family-supporting jobs.

Volunteer Generation Fund

The Siouxland Volunteer Center in Sioux City, a Volunteer Generation Fund grantee, has taken an active role in providing educational presentations to community groups, such as college students, recent retirees, the Mayor's Youth Ambassadors and unemployed individuals through the local workforce center. These presentations, including, "Volunteer for Your Future," Volunteer NOW!" and "So You Are Retired, Now What?" have garnered positive community feedback. The recent presentation at the workforce center has allowed the center to connect two unemployed individuals with computer skills to local nonprofits for web development. The volunteers have reported that the networking and skill-building has been great for their resume and enable them to keep their skills sharp while they look for employment. The nonprofits report that the value of the volunteers' work has been tremendous to their agencies.